



3 cities aren't in harmony on I-10

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While the Interstate 10 widening acceleration will likely begin in the near future, it's too early to count on Avondale, Goodyear and Litchfield Park singing *Kumbaya* while swaying together, arm in arm, in three-part harmony.

That's because the three cities aren't done disagreeing, and that means the fast-tracked freeway widening will probably be delayed until all sides reach a consensus.

The Avondale City Council voted Monday to pitch in on the freeway expansion, but it didn't contribute enough money, according to Goodyear.

"The Goodyear City Council did not agree to this division (of money) when it approved the (intergovernmental agreement)," Laurie Hillebrands, chief of staff for the Goodyear mayor and council, told the Avondale council. "While I cannot predict their actions should this come before them, I know that a change in the percentages would not be favorably received.

"In any case, your acceptance of these percentages tonight will likely delay the project. It will cause renegotiation."

The Avondale council unanimously agreed to split its payment of \$1 million with Litchfield Park, leaving Goodyear to put in the remaining \$2 million needed to complete the \$3 million the Southwest Valley cities need to contribute toward the accelerated freeway widening.

Hillebrands complained to the Avondale council that Goodyear's obligation increased to 74 percent from 58.5 percent, while Avondale's contribution decreased to 24 percent from 38.5 percent.

Litchfield Park's contribution was reduced from 3 percent to less than 2 percent, Hillebrands said. The Litchfield Park council will vote on its share of the money on Wednesday.

Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers said she doesn't understand Goodyear's problem.

"They're paying the same amount as before," Rogers said. "We didn't want them to pay more, either. They agreed to the \$6 million. They voted on the \$6 million, so we felt that was fair."

The three cities were upset last month after Valley elected officials on the Maricopa Association of Governments regional council gave the cities \$6 million for the project, instead of the \$10 million they thought they deserved.

State lawmakers this year set aside \$10 million to reimburse the three cities. But MAG, which distributed the funds, decided the cities should pay some costs.

While Goodyear agreed to pay its share of the remaining \$4 million, Avondale and Litchfield Park refused to go along with

the \$6 million figure, which MAG later raised to \$7 million.

The cities want to expand I-10 to five lanes in each direction between Loop 101 and Sarival Road. That stretch of freeway is dangerous and too often congested as the freeway narrows to two lanes in each direction.

The intergovernmental agreement is among Avondale, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, MAG and the Arizona Department of Transportation.